

"As Many As Received Him"



By Dr. Curtis Hutson (1934-1995)

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." —John 1:10-13.

There are two groups in the world. Not everyone is a child of God. There is a modern teaching concerning the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man, but here we read: "But as many as received him [Jesus], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." I think the word "sons" here could be translated "children" because it has reference both to men and women.

In John 8:44 Jesus said to another group, "Ye are of your father the devil." So there are plainly two groups in the world: those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour, and thus God is their Father by regeneration; and those who have never done anything about the matter of salvation and are lost. Every person in this room this morning is in one of those two groups.

Do You Know You Are a Child of God?

Suppose I were to ask you this morning, "If you were to die today, do you know for sure you would go to Heaven?"

If you say, "I hope so," or, "I think so," or, "My chances are good," then just regard that as "No." If you "hope so," that indicates you lack assurance of salvation.

"Well, Dr. Hutson, nobody can really answer that question. Nobody can say for sure that if he dies, he will go to Heaven," you say.

I beg to differ with you. The entire First Epistle of John was written for that purpose. In I John 5:13 the apostle says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

Paul said, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded [thoroughly convinced] that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Tim. 1:12).

In Job 19:25,26 Job said, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." That is assurance.

The blind songwriter, Fanny Crosby, wrote:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

I trusted Jesus when I was eleven years old; but I lacked assurance of salvation, not knowing upon what to base my assurance. One day I would think I was saved, and the next, I would wonder if maybe I was wrong about it and perhaps was lost; until finally I came out of the darkness of doubt into the broad daylight of certainty. I based my assurance on the promise of God, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). I decided either I have everlasting life or God's Word is not true. The only thing I can doubt is that I am trusting Him or that He meant what He said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." When I doubted I was trusting Him, I didn't argue about it; I just prayed again and told the Lord if I had never trusted Him, I was then trusting Him.

When the Devil would say, "How do you know you are trusting Him?" I would pray out loud, "Dear Lord, if I have never trusted You, I am trusting You now." Immediately all doubt would leave.

I am more sure that I am going to Heaven when I die than I am sure I am standing on this platform. I am more sure that I am going to Heaven when I die than I am sure that I am married. And I know I'm married.

Suppose somebody had asked me a few minutes after I was married, "Are you married?" and I answered, "Well, I hope so."

"What do you mean, you hope so?"

"Well, I can't say for sure."

Everyone knows for sure whether he is married, divorced or single. And everyone who is saved ought to know it. Everyone ought to know that when he dies, he is going to Heaven—and he can know it. It is the birthright of every born-again, blood-washed believer.

You are in one group or the other. You are either a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ, or you are a child of the Devil by the fact that you simply never trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour.

One fellow arguing with Billy Sunday said, "Yes, I'm a child of God."

Billy Sunday asked, "Where do you get that?"

"We are all children of God by creation."

Sunday replied, "The Lord created the monkey and the donkey. Does that make them your brothers?"

You are not God's child by creation. You are God's child by regeneration.

How Does One Become a Child of God?

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."—John 1:11,12.

"Not of Blood"

Now, look at verse 13: "Which were born"—that is the new birth. Then it goes to the negative side: "not of blood." This simply means you are not a Christian because your father was a Christian or your grandfather was a Christian. You are not going to Heaven because you belong to a religious family.

On a train one day Dr. Ironside asked a man about his salvation. "O Sir, religion runs in my family," he answered.

Dr. Ironside said, "The only thing that runs in your family is your sinful nature."

Someone said there is a little spark of divinity in all of us and all it needs is a little fanning to flame up. There is a little devil in all of us, but I have never found a little spark of divinity in anybody.

When a baby loses his temper, Mamma says, "He's just like his daddy!" He loses his temper again, and his daddy says, "He's just like his mother!" I have said that. But the truth is, he is like both his mother AND daddy. When you get the devil that is in Mamma and the devil that is in Daddy together in the child, you have a devil of a mess!

Oh, you think yours is a little angel. No. He has a sinful heart. My children were not born saying, "Yes, Sir," and "Yes, Ma'am," and "Thank you." We had to slap their hands and say, "You give it back if you can't say, 'Thank you.'" Yes, they would say, "Thank you," but not mean it. They had no real gratitude because of their sinful nature. Something inside was pulling them in the wrong direction.

The Bible says you are "born, not of blood...." You do not owe your second birth to blood. The only thing you inherit from your parents is your sin nature, the thing inside that drives you in the wrong direction.

In Psalm 51:5 David said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Romans 5:12 states, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Romans 5:19 reads, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."

You were born with something inside that pulled you in the wrong direction, and that is called a sin nature. You are not a sinner because you sin; you sin because you are a sinner. Sins don't make the sinner; the sinner makes the sins. Sins are the fruit; sin is the root. You do what you do because you are what you are.

You are not born again of blood. No matter if your mother sings in the choir, your father receives the offering, your brother leads in prayer and your sister shouts while they sing –unless you are born of the Spirit, you will go to Hell when you die! You can join every church in town and be baptized in every creek in your county, but if you are not born again, you are on your way to Hell.

“Nor...of the Flesh”

Second, he said, “Which were born, not...of the will of the flesh.” Nothing you can do in your flesh will save you.

Now I am for reformation, as long as reformation is in the right place; but if reformation is used as an instrument of salvation, then I detest reformation. The fellow who believes he can gain acceptance before a holy God by reforming his life is as lost as a goose!

The Bible says in Isaiah 64:6, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Not the worst you can do but the best you can do is like a dirty, filthy rag in God’s sight.

I will probably shock you with this statement: I had as soon trust my sins to get me to Heaven as to trust my righteousness. I don’t think any man would press his dying pillow and start bragging, “I deserve Heaven because I’ve lived so good! I don’t smoke, chew nor run with those who do!” I’m living right, but none will go to Heaven because they live right.

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh....” That leaves out everything having to do with the flesh, including baptism.

I’m a Baptist. We baptized more converts than any other church in the state of Georgia. For the last three years, we baptized over eight hundred converts each year. But we know one is not saved by being baptized.

I am for reforming. When a man is saved, he ought to live right. But until he is saved, he doesn’t have anything with which to live right. The Christian life is not an imitation of the Christ life. The Christian life is Jesus living in you, according to Paul’s statement in Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh....” You can turn over a new leaf, but you don’t need a new leaf; you need a new life. You can resolve to live better, but you don’t need a resolution; you need regeneration. You can join, but you don’t need joining; you need Jesus.

“...Nor of the Will of Man”

No man can do one thing to bring about this regeneration. That leaves the Catholic priest out. Catholics believe that when they baptize an infant, it does away with his

original sin and keeps him out of limbo in case he dies in infancy but it won't keep him out of Hell unless he gets all seven sacraments—seven channels of grace, so to speak. They call the priest "Father" because he gives them their spiritual birth when he baptizes them. But new birth doesn't come through any rite performed by the Catholic priest nor any rite performed by the Baptist preacher nor of the will of any man, no matter who he is.

"...But of God"—Receive Him

"Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

If you do not become a child of God by the will of the flesh or by blood or by the will of man, then how do you become a child of God?

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

How does it take place? There it is in verse 12: "But as many as received him"—not "as many as received it," but, "As many as received him." Salvation is not a program; it is a Person. Salvation is not an endurance test; it is a Person. "As many as received him"—Jesus Christ—to them gave He the right to become the sons of God.

What does "As many as received him [Jesus]" mean? I don't see Jesus. Where is He? You show me Him, and I'll receive Him. I can't see Him. What does it mean to receive Jesus? The last expression in the verse explains it: "...even to them that believe on his name." To receive Jesus is to believe on Jesus.

If I understand anything about salvation, there is one determining factor: faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. The Bible has many such verses:

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."—John 3:36.

Here Jesus divides the world into two groups.

He again divides the world into two groups:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."—John 3:18.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."—Mark 16:16.

Why will men be damned? Because they won't believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't say, "He that believeth not and is baptized not and does not keep the Ten Commandments and does not receive the seven sacraments and does not get the last rites shall be damned." It just says, "He that believeth not shall be damned."

Someone asked Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., "Doesn't the Bible say, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'?"

Dr. Bob answered, "Yes. And the rest of it says, 'He that believeth not shall be damned.'" He continued: "Sir, that is like saying, 'He that getteth on the plane and sitteth down shall fly to Tampa, Florida; but he that getteth not on the plane shall not fly to Tampa, Florida.'"

It is the getting on that gets you there, not the sitting down. And "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is the believing that gets you saved, not the being baptized. But any sensible person knows if you get on an airplane, you ought to sit down! And any sensible person knows if you get saved, you ought to be baptized. But faith is the determining factor in salvation.

A lady had been a Christian only a few years. After she died, her son came to me and asked, "Do you think my mother went to Heaven?"

I said, "Yes."

Then he asked, "Do you really think my mother was good enough to go to Heaven?"

I answered, "No."

"Well," he said, "you contradicted yourself. You said you thought my mother went to Heaven; then you turned right around and told me you didn't think she was good enough to go to Heaven."

I said, "I didn't contradict myself. I do think she went to Heaven, but she didn't go to Heaven on her goodness; she went to Heaven on Christ's goodness. Her righteousnesses were like filthy rags; but when she put her faith in Jesus Christ and confessed herself a poor, lost sinner and trusted Jesus Christ completely for salvation, she had imputed to her the righteousness of God. And she is as righteous in God's sight as Jesus Christ Himself."

That is enough to make a Presbyterian shout!

How does one become a child of God? "...not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." How does it happen? "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." That simply means if you put your case in His hands, believe you are a sinner, believe Jesus Christ died for you, believe He paid your sin debt at Calvary, and trust Him completely, without reservation, you are going to Heaven.

I don't know about you, but I'm afraid to trust myself. I try to live right. I think I could brag a little, maybe, in the things I have never done: I don't know what whiskey tastes like; I don't know what beer tastes like; I never gambled in my life. I'm glad I lived like that, but I would just as soon go to Heaven and tell God how bad I have been as to tell Him how good I have been and expect Him to let me in, because all my righ-teousness stinks in His sight. I have to have something better than what I can do.

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). There is not a Christian I know of who lives as righteous as scribes and Pharisees. You have to have something better than they had. They wouldn't eat an egg laid on the Sabbath Day! They tithed everything. I don't know one Christian who has always given a tenth of his income from the time he was saved.

I don't live as good as the scribes and Pharisees, but Jesus did; and I am
 Dressed in His righteousness alone,
 Faultless to stand before the throne.

The only way you will get there is through Jesus—J-E-S-U-S:

Jesus

Exactly

Suits

Us

Sinners.

Jesus paid our debt and suffered our Hell; and “as many as received him [believed on Him, trusted Him], to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”

If you are trusting Jesus plus something, you are lost. The “plus” will send you to Hell. If I put my confidence in this little clergy seat to hold me up, with ninety percent of my weight on it and ten percent on a rope, the ten percent destroys the ninety percent, because the ten percent says I am not fully, completely trusting this chair—just in case it won’t do it, I want this rope.

And you are not going to Heaven until you fully, completely, unreservedly, wholeheartedly trust Jesus Christ to get you to Heaven.

Set out to be the best Christian you can be. Be baptized as the first act of obedience after salvation. Join a Bible-believing church where you can serve God. Learn the Bible. Grow in grace. Become a witness and try to win your friends to Christ. Try to raise a good Christian family and be a good example.

I hope, if you have trusted Christ, you will make up your mind about these other things. I hope, if you have never really trusted Him completely, that you will throw yourself on Him this morning and say in the words of the songwriter:

My hope is built on nothing less
 Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
 I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
 But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
 On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
 All other ground is sinking sand.
Editor Urges You to Be Sure You Are Saved

God has given us the written Word as the basis of our assurance of salvation. And Dr. Hutson has quoted many Scriptures showing how one may know he is saved. Salvation is a free gift, and all one can do is receive it.

Our only hope of Heaven is the promise God has given us in His Word: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36). If you will trust Christ as Saviour—that is, believe on Him—you can know you have everlasting life because God says so.

What does it mean to believe on Christ? It means to trust, to put one's full confidence in Jesus and rest in Him for salvation.

There is no promise in the Bible to those who partially believe on Jesus. One must fully trust Jesus and nothing else. He who is trusting Jesus plus his baptism is not fully trusting Jesus. One who trusts Jesus plus the sacraments is not fully trusting Jesus. One who is trusting Jesus plus his church membership, good life, morality, promises to do better, or anything else, is not fully trusting Jesus. It is Jesus, period.

One should live as good as he possibly can, but he doesn't go to Heaven because he lives good. He goes to Heaven because Jesus Christ paid his sin debt, and he trusts Christ as his Saviour.

If you have never trusted Him, will you do so now? Romans 10:13 says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If you will trust Him, I suggest you pray this simple prayer:

Dear Lord, I admit I'm a sinner. I do believe You died for me and arose from the grave to be my Saviour. I do right now trust You to forgive my sin and save me. From this moment, I am fully depending on You to take me to Heaven when I die. Thank You for paying my sin debt and receiving me as Your child. Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, then I would love to hear from you. I have some free literature that will help you as you set out to live the Christian life. All you need do to receive it is to fill out the decision form and send it to me. How glad I will be to hear that you now have trusted Christ as your Saviour and are on your way to Heaven!

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